

“We seek our place in the world  
and the answers to our hearts’ deep questions.  
As we seek, may our hearts be open to unexpected answers.”  
Julianne Lepp

Dear friends,

I am living in the “land of firsts” at the moment, my first Sunday service preaching, my first board meeting, my first senior lunch, my first pastoral care check-ins, and now my first letter to you all in the Anvil. We are in an exciting place at 2U right now and I am overjoyed to be in this place with you. I want to express my gratitude for how welcoming, kind, and patient you have been with me as I started my first two weeks here. I want to give a special shout out to those of you who wear name tags. While we as UUs do not traditionally believe in a savior, name tags are pretty close for me. Let me express my embarrassment that I am not great at remembering names, and right now I am learning so many. Your assistance and patience as I learn is much appreciated.

These last two weeks have been quite full here at church and in our world. As I shared on Sunday, I have been aware of my heart aching about the brokenness of our world. As we engage in the shared work of healing that brokenness, I am so glad that we have this community to turn to for strength. While working through the many logistics of a new job in a new church with new responsibilities, I have been striving to create time to be mindful, to breathe, to notice the things around me. Do you have a practice that grounds you in the moment when things are moving fast? Do you have a practice that allows you to grasp what is in front of you even while holding our world’s brokenness with love? Engaging in these practices can help us manage that which seems unmanageable. I invite you to take a moment right now. Just breathe...

Along with all the firsts and changes going on for me, there are some changes coming for us as a community. On Sunday I had the opportunity to meet with members of the Sunday Services Committee, Board of Trustees, Strategic Planning Team, Anti-Racism Committee, and our dedicated DFD and Music Director. We met to plan out the arc of our worship services for the year. We will be trying out the practice of theme-based worship. We will utilize theme’s offered by the Soul Matters Sharing Circle. This practice will give us a monthly theme that will flow throughout church life, encouraging us to engage with each other on the theme in a multitude of ways. September’s theme to start us off is *Expectation*. You can learn more about the practice of theme-based ministry on the UUA’s website [HERE](#).

In addition to trying on theme-based worship practices this year, we also approved some changes to the liturgy. Starting on September 15<sup>th</sup> we will be trying out our new way of flowing through the service. Some of the order will feel familiar to ways we have done things in the past. For instance, announcements have moved back to the beginning of the service as part of the welcome and before we share in music together. All announcements need to be printed in the order of service and we will no longer have live announcements except in very special circumstances. We will also be seeing more participation of the Worship Associate as that person leads us in more of the pieces. There will be other changes, and we will go through this journey of change together with love and a willingness to try on new things. I encourage you to share your thoughts with the Sunday Services Committee members and me as you notice your own reactions to the changes. To reassure those who have asked, we will still be singing Spirit of Life

together each Sunday and we will absolutely still have our practice of lighting candles of joys and concerns.

There is always more to be said and shared. For now, I close while filled with feelings of anticipation about this journey we are starting together.

In faithful solidarity,  
RevJ

P.S. I am wondering if anyone might have skills and willingness to make or share curtains with me for my office. I am still in the slow process of getting everything set up and am hoping to increase the beauty and calmness of my office so that those who sit with me can feel grounded in the space. I welcome your talents and thoughts.